

Work ethic, competitiveness take Pas native to the top

By **BRAD CROCKER**
The Mississippi Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Pascagoula native Franz Hanning has been keeping busy after being chosen to head up two of the world's leading vacation ownership companies forecasted to produce about \$1.5 billion in sales with a portfolio of more than 150 resorts nationwide and about 700,000 owners.

A 1972 graduate of Pascagoula High, Hanning, 50, president and CEO of both Fairfield Resorts and Trendwest North America, attributes much of his successes to his parents, Franz Sr. and Jimmie, who still reside in Pascagoula, and who he said instilled a responsible work ethic early in his life, which started with a paper route and included stints at his uncle's service station and contracting company and Winn-Dixie before entering the travel timeshare industry.

"They've always been there for me. My memories of growing up (in Pascagoula) and going to school there are very positive," Hanning said.

He was also influenced by a "very competitive" group of Pascagoula natives from the 1970s who he said have become "very successful people in all walks of life. I still have a lot of friends there in Pascagoula."

Circuit Court Judge Dale Harkey said Hanning's "wonderfully successful life and career" was the result of hard work and his ability to work with others and that his competitiveness was always evident.

Harkey said Hanning helped his family handle a serious matter several years ago and "went above and beyond what most people will do," gestures Harkey said he will never forget.

"He's just such a great guy...highly intelligent and comes from a great family," Harkey said.

Hanning's best friend, Wilson Moore and Moore's father, Hugh, now his brother-in-law and father-in-law, respectively, helped him get started in the industry.

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Submitted Photo

Franz Hanning, formerly of Pascagoula, is president and CEO of both Fairfield Resorts and Trendwest North America.

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Since joining Fairfield in 1982 as a sales professional, Hanning has held several key leadership positions including regional vice president, executive vice president of sales and chief operating officer.

Hanning was named president and CEO of Fairfield upon its acquisition by Centant in 2001, and has led the company through three successive years of double-digit timeshare sales growth.

He said the companies' strength are the employees he referred to as "many of the most talented professionals in the industry" who make his job easier, which includes looking for new opportunities, markets and alliances for the two companies in the competitive resort and vacation industry.

"I believe in creating a really exceptional workplace atmosphere where people can

grow," he said.

While continuing to improve property values of the vacation resorts and homes and expand the marketplace around the world, Hanning said 40 percent of their sales come from existing customers.

"The people love the product and buy it multiple times," he said of the vacation getaways offered with "world-class customer service to our owners and give them memorable vacation experiences."

When he's not traveling, Hanning's time is spent with his wife, Kelly, formerly of Pascagoula, and their children, Tyson, 3, and 18-month-old Olivia.

"I'm home more than I travel and I wouldn't have it any other way," he said.

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